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AUTHOR Roach, Karen
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ABSTRACT

This bibliography is intended to expose art teachers and elementary classroom teachers to visual images found in children's literature. Books listed are organized into potential thematic units and are limited to books by well-known children's authors. These books represent useful tools for making connections between visual arts and other components of a thematic unit. Subject areas addressed include: animals, architecture, artists, cartooning, children, costume, fairy tales (nontraditional), families, folktales and legends, friendship, landscapes and seascapes, make-believe, multicultural themes, neighborhoods, portraits, quilts, rural America, scientific illustration, and urban America. (MM)

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Art Themes Found in Children's Literature

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7133 Wren Drive
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Thematic Units

Thematic units provide a framework for lessons to flow from one to another in an organized fashion. These units can last a grading period, semester, or an entire year. The theme for each grade level may be different, or a common theme may be shared by the entire school. The purpose of a thematic unit is *not* to confine the teacher to specific art endeavors, but rather, to provide unity between lessons.

The purpose of this bibliography is to expose art teachers as well as elementary classroom teachers to visual images found in children's literature. We *should* consider children's books as a valid source of easily accessible visual imagery. These books are organized into potential thematic units and are limited to books by well-know children's authors. Obviously, this body of work is a *small* piece of a much larger pie, but it does serve as a starting point; areas such as science and social studies remain virtually unexplored. Most of the books can be found in the children's picture-book section of local libraries as well as children's book-order clubs. While we are more concerned with the illustrators, the traditional method for finding these books is through their writers.

A secondary purpose for this bibliography is to address the practice of *teaching across the curriculum*. This is a common practice used in many educational disciplines today. In fact, it has shaped the organization of many textbook programs for subjects such as reading, spelling, and language arts. Teaching across the curriculum simply refers to making connections between two or more disciplines. This document is a useful tool for making connections between visual arts and language arts.

In the past, a similar practice of making connections between subject areas was called integration. Unfortunately, integration of visual arts with other disciplines commonly reduced art to a tool for teaching other subject areas. Nevertheless, this practice may be changing. Beth Olshansky, Director of *Image - Making Within the Writing Process* at the University of New Hampshire, works with an arts-based literacy program that recognizes visual imagery as an important element in the writing process.[1] While this arts-based program takes a Lowenfeld approach, I believe it would be enhanced with art instruction. Nevertheless, art educators need to be informed about current trends in other disciplines and take advantage of these useful ideas.

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[1] See Olshansky, B. Picture this: An arts-based literacy program. *Educational Leadership*, 1995, 53(1), 44-47.

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The Impressionists
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Rousseau: Still Voyages
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What Makes a Rembrandt a Rembrandt?
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Picture This: An Arts-Based Literacy Program

Educational Leadership
Volume 53 No. 1
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Beth Olshansky

When children's stories are driven by rich visual images, their writing is transformed in many powerful ways.

Six-year-old Ross hangs on the back of his chair, looking forlorn, as the other children write stories. Although his mind abounds with ideas, Ross is having difficulty creating a bridge between the ideas in his head and the blank piece of paper in front of him.

These collage books were written and illustrated by 8-year-olds.

When asked to share what he is thinking, his eyes light up. Ross picks up a blue marbleized paper. "I think I found something," he says, bringing the paper just inches away from his face. "A thing with two eyes and a mouth." After staring into the goading face of his discovered creature, Ross grins, "I know what my story is called: *Do You Know What an Animal Is?*"

He elaborates: "I'm gonna try to find all kinds of strange things to be animals. The animals that do exist and don't exist. I want to say that the strange animals are the *real* ones." As Ross shares his ideas, he casually picks a plastic wrap print he created and begins cutting around a second discovered creature. "It's a Frost Cacklelor," explains Ross. "He's ferocious. He doesn't like being disturbed while he's making his ice. He spits out ice from his mouth after he swishes water inside his mouth. Inside his mouth is very, very cold."

"And here's a Paint Plucker [pointing to a splatter painting]. It's a kind of animal artist. It uses its tail to form the paint into pictures. Sometimes it paints on animals to camouflage them, and it can turn itself into different colors by squirting paint all over itself."

Ross continues, "At the end, I'm gonna have the Paint Plucker camouflage all the strange animals so no one can see them." His eyes twinkle. "People will only see regular animals!" Looking up from the page with a big grin, he boasts, "I have a *big* imagination. I can even change *real* people to look like all kinds of things."

An Invitation to Write

Ross's imaginative approach to story-making is typical of many children engaged in Image-Making Within the Writing Process. In operation for six years, the program has been in the National Diffusion Network for three years. This arts-based literacy program integrates children's visual imagery at *every* stage of the writing process from the earliest prewriting/idea formulating stage through rehearsal, drafting, revision, and preparation for publication. By being introduced to a variety of simple art materials and methods from the very start, young author/illustrators have access to visual and kinesthetic, as well as verbal, modes of thinking. For verbal thinkers, this approach can serve to extend their thinking and their writing. For children, like Ross, who have diverse learning styles, it provides an enticing alternative pathway into writing. Six-year-old Kevin describes his own image-making experience:

> While I was doing the pictures first, words just started to grow, and I got more ideas to write and I just writ and writ and writ until it was a finished book....

But Image-Making Within the Writing Process is not just for children in the primary grades. To date, it has inspired budding author/illustrators in both elementary and middle schools. Language Arts teacher Margaret Belowski, who has seen all 110 of her 7th graders soar with this creative process, explains:

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A 1st grader sets out her collage images in order to rehearse her story line.

> One of the things that impresses me the most is that every child, even those without artistic ability, can shine with this process. Image-Making enriches both the children who have a hard time with writing *and* the children who are already writers.
>
> I think the children really astonished themselves by what they created. And it's not just the children ... *everyone* who sees these books takes a breath, amazed at how beautiful they are.

An outgrowth of process writing, Image-Making gives children the task of creating beautiful picture books. Working together as a community of professionals, they study the work of other author/illustrators, use real art materials, and create stories according to their own unique creative processes.

Because this program equally values verbal and visual modes of expression, and recognizes diverse learning styles, youngsters are purposely not directed toward either writing first or making pictures first. When left to their own devices, children will naturally enter the story-making process from a position of strength. Hannah, a 3rd grader and second-year student of Image-Making is very clear about her own choices:

> I *always* do my pictures first because then I can get looks at my pictures to help me with my describing words. If I wrote my words first, I wouldn't be able to see my describing words in my pictures.

Inspired by Images

Inspired by the colorful collage images of Eric Carle, Leo Lionni, and Ezra Jack Keats, Image-Making Within the Writing Process first asks each child to create a personal portfolio of hand-painted, textured papers. Engaged in free exploration with a variety of art materials and techniques, children are easily stimulated by color, texture, and movement. It is not uncommon for children to spontaneously "see things" in their textured papers while in the throes of creating bubble prints or marbleized designs.

When 7-year-old Christopher spots a great winged dragon floating on top of his marbleizing solution, he has the wherewithal to quickly drop his paper flat onto the tray, thus capturing his discovered creature. At the splatter station next to him, Meagan is reminded of fireworks in the "exploding" splatters that suddenly filled her page. Both these initial sparks of ideas find their way into a story later in each child's story-making process.

If spontaneous images do not arise for children during the actual making of textured papers, this process of free association is reinforced later, once the portfolios of textured papers have been completed. The classroom teacher holds up a textured paper and, in Rorschachian fashion, asks, "What does this remind you of?" As children practice "reading" their textured papers, discovered creatures and settings become the inspiration for imaginative story ideas. This process of "image-finding" is central to the prewriting/idea-gathering stage of the program. As each stage of the writing process is redefined to include a strong visual component, children are given important tools for accessing visual and kinesthetic modes of thinking.

Redefining the Stages of Writing

While prewriting activities center around image-finding, the rehearsal stage involves "image-weaving." This activity comes quite naturally to most children: the weaving together of discovered images to create a story line. Like Ross, children often spontaneously begin to weave a story from the threads of ideas discovered within their own textured papers. The story lines that result are equal only to their wildest dreams.

For example, 8-year-old Meagan's personal narrative about a trip to the ocean to watch the fireworks (inspired by her splatter painting) suddenly takes an unexpected turn. As Meagan cuts out colorful fireworks from a variety of textured papers, one image reminds her of a shark. Staring into her uncombed magenta-and-purple marbleized paper, Meagan suddenly finds herself inside a shark's mouth and in an unanticipated sea adventure.

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In the end, her title, *The Amazing Fireworks Story*, reflects Meagan's own surprise at the unexpected twist her story has taken!

Drafting in Pictures and Words

Once the image-weaving/rehearsal stage of this process is well under way, and children have orally rehearsed their story lines, the textured papers become the raw materials for building colorful collages. As children cut and paste, weaving together images in pictures and words, stories unfold through a lively creative process.

A 4th grader discovers "pond life" in the uncombed marbleized paper he just created.

David, a very active 2nd grader, admits that his ideas often "fly out of his head" before he gets them down on paper. All this changed for David once Image-Making provided him with concrete tools for thinking. Discovering a swirling blue tornado in his marbleized paper, scissors in hand, David immediately frees his tornado from the page. Then, seeming to take on a life of its own, the blue tornado spins around the classroom accompanied by great swishing sounds as David at once develops and embodies his story line. Discovering a fierce rainstorm in an uncombed marbleized paper ("It's raining rocks"), and blustery clouds in a bubble print (a painted print made from blowing bubbles), David naturally proceeds into the rehearsal and drafting stages of the writing process. After a "stormy" rehearsal, David glues his tornado to the page before it blows away. As a visual and kinesthetic learner, and a child who struggles with writing, David chooses to draft his entire story in pictures first, long before he begins to create text.

As an author/illustrator with distinct learning preferences, his choice is a wise one. With a concrete visual record of his thoughts mapped out before him, David rehearses his story again and again through "image-reading." Literally holding his ideas firmly in his hands, David tells his story with equally vivid language: "It seems like we're caught in a meteor shower. I go outside. Huge rocks like pumpkins hit me from all sides. It's raining rocks."

For young author/illustrators like David, image-reading offers a concrete bridge between their rich visual thoughts (recorded in colorful collage images) and the text they are expected to write. David's comments reflect how natural this process is for many children:

> Writing used to be hard for me, but now it's easy. All I have to do is look at each picture and describe some things I see. I listen to my words to see if they match my story, and they always do. Now writing is my favorite part of school.

What the Research Says

Image-Making has repeatedly proven itself to be an invitation into literacy learning that few children can refuse. The Laboratory for Interactive Learning at the University of New Hampshire conducted a two-year study of more than 400 New Hampshire children involved in the program. The research findings supported teachers' classroom observations that adding a rich visual and sensory component to the writing process not only dramatically enriches children's story-making, but also enhances their finished pieces.

According to this study, students who participate in the program demonstrate dramatic improvements in their writing abilities and gain fuller power of expression than a control group of demographically matched, nonparticipating students. Scoring of the texts alone revealed that

- writing topics are more varied and imaginative;
- story plots are more fully developed;
- stories have a stronger sense of beginning, middle, and ending;

A 2nd grader prepares to make a bubble print.

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■ stories are better crafted, often having a more literary quality; and

■ rich descriptive language is prevalent, even in the stories of emerging 1st grade writers.

Looking at the relationship between words and pictures in children's "published" stories, researchers found that stories written and illustrated by participants in the Image-Making Process display a fuller expression of ideas compared to stories illustrated with markers. To enhance the meaning of their text, children use the elements of color, space, shape, and texture, as well as detail and shifts in perspective. Their visual images not only convey important aspects of the text but are, at times, vital in carrying the story *beyond* the text.

An Avenue for Personal Stories

Research aside, Image-Making Within the Writing Process gives young author/illustrators a meaningful new way to dive into literacy learning. While some of their stories appear to be pure unadulterated fun, others take on a poignant sense of personal metaphor.

This is true for Jeffrey, a 1st grader whose story about a little ship tossed about by crashing waves clearly reflects his mother's recent abandonment of the family. It is also the case for Amy, an 8th grader who writes about a young girl's search for friendship. It is no accident that her collage images depict the girl as blending in with her surroundings, almost invisible to others. In each instance, Image-Making has provided children with an important avenue for expressing their personal stories.

Whether witnessing the deeply moving moment when an authentic story takes shape or the dramatic turnaround of a disinterested, disengaged 6th grader, teachers are beginning to notice the vital difference Image-Making can make in the literacy learning of diverse learners.

But it is not just teachers who are noticing. Serena, a 6th grader, sums up her experience this way:

> The pictures paint the words on paper for you, so your words are much better. The words are more descriptive. Sometimes you can't describe the pictures because they are so beautiful. ■

Beth Olshansky is the Developer and Program Director of Image-Making Within the Writing Process, Laboratory for Interactive Learning, University of New Hampshire, Hood House, 89 Main St., Durham, NH 03824-3577. For information about federally subsidized training programs and materials kits, as well as sample collage books, please contact the author.

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